



"Providing the most basic of human needs... food, shelter & hope"

FISH • Friends In Service to Humanity of Northwestern Connecticut, Inc.

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Testimony for the Appropriations Hearing/Department of Housing/February 17, 2017

Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Representative Ziobron and Members of the Committee.

I came to the FISH Shelter in February 2014. I was recommended by the Newington VA. When I arrived at the Shelter, I was greeted by Vera, the Veterans Case Manager. Vera took me to the office and we talked about the different issues I was facing. My main problem I had was my heart, and that I need a Quadruple Bypass. She gave me great comfort to know that everything was going to be alright, and that I would get the help and the care and services that I would need. I also met other FISH staff. Then I was assigned to the Vets program where I had a bed and a safe place to call home. All the staff and residents made me feel like it was one big family. I felt wanted and not alone. I am still grateful today for the family atmosphere that was at FISH. It was a blessing having everyone care so much about my health condition. I had a great case manager who assisted me to obtain many VA benefits that I never knew I was entitled to, and I successfully recovered from bypass surgery and discharged into permanent housing.

Although I am a former veteran who resided at the FISH Veterans program, I still participate in the Memorial Day parade, The Rally to End Homelessness and Hunger, and other Holiday events and gatherings. I am grateful every day for being surrounded by friends, and I will cherish forever the help I received. I now call FISH my family.

Please provide any funding to keep FISH shelter open and support what they offer to the homeless veterans, families and individuals.

Thank You.

Sincerely,

James Lombardo

Former FISH Shelter Resident